

Patrol Squadron Four's Philippine Detachment; a Huge Success.

Beginning in January, 32 aircrew and maintenance personnel departed Kadena Air Base, Okinawa to take part in a Maritime Surveillance Exercise (MARSURVEX), the first of its kind, in the Philippines. Among the personnel detached was VP-4's Executive Officer, CDR Kevin Long, the Detachment Officer in Charge, LCDR Joe Brunson, and Combat Air Crew Eleven lead by Mission Commander, LTJG Matthew Derks.

Flown out of Clark Air Base on Luzon Island, this exercise was held to enhance U.S. and Philippine maritime interoperability using the surface surveillance capabilities of the U.S. Navy's P-3 Orion. The detachment was also an opportunity for Patrol Squadron Four to enhance foreign relations and provide crews with excellent, real-world experience.

Once in country, the crew provided guided tours of the P-3 to 20 members of the Philippine Navy and Coast Guard. Guided by CAC-11 Mission Commander, Matthew Derks, the guests learned basics about buoy loading, crew member responsibilities, and aircraft limitations. With qualified operators at each tactical station, the guests moved about the aircraft and were provided positional capabilities briefs from the crew.

The tactical phase of MARSURVEX began on January 18 and ran through the 21st of January. It consisted of four Maritime Domain Awareness missions south of Jolo Island. In order to demonstrate the P-3 Orion's over water, surface-search capabilities, the squadron invited five Filipino riders, each mission, to fly with the crew and experience Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance operations. Working in tandem with eight Filipino Coastal Watch Stations, the crew was able to detect and identify over 400 radar contacts in the Sulu Sea. Additionally, the Filipino riders were provided aerial photography of selected radar contacts as the crew demonstrated low altitude passes referred to as RIGS. Both the crew and the riders truly enjoyed working with each other, making the exercise a very rewarding experience.

Following the conclusion of MARSURVEX, through their own initiative, the 32 VP-4 detachment personnel took the opportunity to contribute to the Philippine community by visiting the Duyan Ni Maria Children's Home in Mabalanas, during their off duty hours. The orphanage provides shelter and education to abandoned, neglected, and maltreated children. Personally donating over a thousand dollars, the detachment purchased desperately needed supplies for the Children's Home, to include; rice, canned foods,

cooking oil, diapers, infant formula, and medicine. By delivering the supplies themselves, VP-4 personnel were able to interact with the children and directly see the impact their contributions made. LTJG Ever Garay stated, "I'm really glad I was able to see the looks on the children's faces. I haven't felt this good in a while." The trip to the orphanage made a huge impact on both the children and the members of the detachment.

As VP-4's first detachment of deployment MARSURVEX was a vast success; demonstrating the value of maritime patrol in the region and enhancing international relations between the Philippines and the United States. Equally important, the outreach to the Philippines community impacted CAC-11 and VP-4's maintenance personnel to a degree that will not soon be forgotten.